

Evaluating the ERCM Planning Process

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Who Are We?

- ★ The Emergency Response and Crisis Management (ERCM) Technical Assistance Center is funded through the Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools
 - Kathy Zantal-Wiener, Director
 - Allan Porowski, Deputy Director
- ★ Web site up soon, with dynamic TA request form:
<http://www.ercm.org>
- ★ Can provide guidance – or direct you to the right person – to answer any ERCM-related questions, including questions about evaluation

Objectives

- ✱ To introduce you to the field of evaluation
- ✱ To describe roles in the evaluation process
- ✱ To describe key elements of ERCM evaluations
- ✱ To get you started – right now – on developing an evaluation
- ✱ To describe how evaluation results should be communicated

Evaluation Requires:

- ✱ A desire to improve the ERCM planning process and the plan itself
- ✱ A willingness to work collegially with a variety of stakeholders
- ✱ Careful attention to detail
- ✱ Desire/willingness and ability to collect and analyze information

Evaluation Helps To:

- ✱ Determine if the project is accomplishing the desired objectives
- ✱ Support decision-making
- ✱ Communicate to stakeholders and the community the purpose of the plan, and the benefits of following the plan
- ✱ Build a knowledge base about what does and does not work in an ERCM plan
- ✱ Generate support for ERCM plan within the community

Evaluation Challenges

- ✱ Qualifications in both ERCM and evaluation
- ✱ Fiscal resources
- ✱ Short project period
- ✱ Screening potential evaluators
- ✱ No cut-and-dry quantitative outcome measures
- ✱ Measuring numerous aspects of mitigation/prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery

The BIG Picture: GPRA Requirements

- ★ Government Performance and Results Act (1993) requires agencies to demonstrate the consequences of their activities.
- ★ ERCM GPRA requirements:
 - Demonstration of increased number of hazards addressed by the improved school emergency response plan as compared to the baseline plan
 - Demonstration of improved response time and quality of response to practice drills and simulated crises
 - A plan for, and commitment to, the sustainability and continuous improvement of school emergency response plans by the district and community partners beyond the period of Federal financial assistance

Getting Started

Step 1: Assign roles and responsibilities

The Project Director:

- ★ Communicates evaluation expectations to all stakeholders
- ★ Confers with evaluator on development of a logic model, project objectives, activities to be evaluated, and sensitive issues in implementing the evaluation
- ★ Coordinates data collection procedures, including development of a data collection matrix

(See handout for additional responsibilities)

Getting Started

Step 1 (Continued): *If you have one, the Evaluator:*

- ★ Designs or identifies reliable and valid instruments to collect data
- ★ Works with PD to supervise evaluation activities, including data collection and observations
- ★ Implement data management and analysis procedures

(See handout for additional responsibilities)

Getting Started

Step 2: Develop a logic model that includes:

- ✦ Inputs, or resources that support the project
- ✦ Interventions or processes that the project will undertake
- ✦ Outputs, or changes that will result from the interventions
- ✦ Outcomes that are broad, but measurable

(See handout for example of an ERCM logic model)

Getting Started

Step 3. Develop evaluation questions that identify:

- ✦ What are the most important aspects of the ERCM planning process?
- ✦ What are the characteristics of a thorough ERCM plan?
- ✦ What changes should result as a result of the plan?
- ✦ How do we determine if the plan is effective?

(See handout)

Examples of General Components of a School ERCM Plan (Step 3)

- ✱ Clearly defined staff roles/responsibilities
- ✱ Procedures for emergency evacuation
- ✱ Lockdown vs. shelter in place decision
- ✱ Setting up a command post
- ✱ Primary/secondary communication procedures
- ✱ Establishing staging/assembly areas
- ✱ Student accounting/release procedures
- ✱ Guidelines for media communication

Examples of Specific Components of a School ERCM Plan (Step 3)

- ✦ Procedures for specific emergencies, including but not limited to: bus accident, bioterrorism, student death, fire, gas leak, hostage situation, missing child, suicide, poisoning, intruder, weather-related situation
- ✦ Threat assessment procedures
- ✦ Caring for students with disabilities and non-English speaking students
- ✦ Team assignments
- ✦ Drill schedules
- ✦ Emergency team quick reference guide
- ✦ Visitor screening policies
- ✦ Dissemination plan

Getting Started

Step 4: Create a data collection matrix that includes the following for each evaluation question:

- ✱ Indicators or data elements
- ✱ Sources for the data
- ✱ Instruments (if any)
- ✱ When collected, and by whom

(See handout for example)

Main Types of Process Evaluation for ERCM Planning

- ☀ Threat/Vulnerability Assessment (Mitigation/Prevention Phase)
- ☀ Resource Assessment (Preparedness Phase)
- ☀ After-Action Reporting (Recovery Phase)
- ☀ Tabletops/Simulations (Throughout)

Threat/Vulnerability Assessment (Mitigation/Prevention Phase)

- ✱ Incident data (YRBS, crime data, gang violence data)
- ✱ School-based information (SROs, security equipment)
- ✱ Community-based data from fire/police/first responders (proximity to chemical plants, nuclear plants, traffic accident data, etc.)
- ✱ Data on natural disasters (e.g., hurricanes, floods, tornadoes)

Resource Assessment (Preparedness Phase)

- ☀ Includes assessment of current crisis plans and resources (i.e., in terms of both personnel and equipment)
- ☀ Data from Mitigation/Prevention phase can also be helpful
- ☀ Look for:
 - ☀ Equipment needs
 - ☀ Communication needs
 - ☀ Working with community partners to develop planning resources
- ☀ Evaluate training/tabletops conducted during the preparedness phase

After-Action Reporting (Recovery)

- ★ The best test of your plan will be whether it works in a real crisis
- ★ Document – as much as possible – your team's response to incidents, drills, or tabletops
- ★ After-action reporting should include detailed questions, such as:
 - What actions did you take during the crisis?
 - Did people act as they were trained?
 - Were the right people trained?
 - What damage did you observe during the crisis?
 - Which interventions/strategies worked best and why?
 - Which recovery strategies would you change and why?
 - Was training adequate?
 - What additional training is necessary to prepare for future crises?
 - What additional equipment is needed?
 - What other planning actions would facilitate future recovery efforts?
 - How did the students respond to the team's response to the crisis?
- ★ Keep a close eye on the long-term effects of a crisis (e.g., discipline problems, trauma, grades, absences, etc.)

Assessment of Tabletops/ Simulations (Throughout)

- ★ Tabletop exercises, as we have seen, can cover all 4 phases, and can cover a variety of situations
- ★ Absent a real emergency, this is one of the most effective methods currently available to assess your ERCM plans
- ★ Although there are no incorrect responses in these exercises, look for:
 - Gaps in your current ERCM plan
 - Innovative ideas that should be incorporated into your plan

Analyzing the Data

- ✱ Analyze data according to project objectives
- ✱ Analyze data according to evaluation questions
- ✱ Provide data in charts/graphs as much as possible
- ✱ Provide text to explain the data in your charts/graphs

Reporting the Evaluation Results

Effective communication requires us to select, single out, structure, highlight, group, synthesize, focus, organize, condense, choose, categorize, classify, discriminate, sort, integrate, inspect, filter, smooth, chunk, average, cluster, aggregate, outline, summarize, itemize, review, dip into, flip through, browse, and refine. (Tufte, 1983).

Communicating Evaluation Results

- ✴ Consider the type and level of information needed by the various stakeholders
- ✴ Tailor the content to make the evaluation results more informative and interesting for each stakeholder
- ✴ Provide the strongest information at the beginning of the presentation and be clear about the ultimate result of the evaluation findings

Summary: Best Practices

- ✱ Forge strong working relationships between your evaluator and your staff
- ✱ Tabletops and simulations provide excellent opportunities for evaluation and data collection
- ✱ Collect data whenever and wherever possible
- ✱ Conduct a detailed debrief after every crisis: this will provide a wealth of information for your evaluation

Summary: DOs and DON'Ts

★ DO:

- ★ Communicate both expectations and results clearly to your staff
- ★ Start with a logic model, and don't hesitate to modify it
- ★ Call us!

★ DON'T:

- ★ Coach your respondents to deliver positive findings
- ★ Let your evaluator deliver findings without your input
- ★ Accept positive findings without a critical eye

References

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Torres, R.T., Preskill, H.S., & Piontek, M.E. (in press) *Evaluation strategies for communicating and reporting: Enhancing learning in organizations* (2nd ed.). Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

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<http://national.unitedway.org/outcomes> (good example of evaluation plans and logic models)